workers blamed the foreman, he accused the crew. Then a clash broke out between a crew and its delegate. Next I was called to the office where a drunk refused to give up his pickax. He swung it about while talking with the engineers, foremen, and delegates but denied that his gestures were a threat. I put an end to the scene by taking the tool out of his hands and ordering him to go home, with the warning that he would be fired for good if he disobeyed. I left him fuming and went back to the ditches where another dispute was in progress. The whole day passed this way. By evening I was exhausted and angry at myself. What was I doing here? What kind of political activity was this?

Walking toward the trolley after the whistle, I noticed that the drunk was shadowing me. At the edge of the works he overtook me. Standing in front of me, he asked:

"Is this the end of our grounds, Comrade Petrov? May one drink beyond that line?"

"Yes, you may if you want to make a fool of yourself."

"Then here is something for you. . . ."

He put his hand into his pocket. Thinking that he would come out with a stone or a knife, I got ready to meet an assault. But he pressed a flask of vodka into my hand.

"I had enough," he explained, "but you must be dead tired. A good gulp is what you need. I shall cover up. . . . Nobody will see."

"Thanks, comrade," I said to him. "I would like to take a drink with you, but you know those who work in the party are advised against drinking—after a gulp people talk too much."

"Too bad," he sighed. "I was saving vodka for you."

"All right, take it home and drink it to my health!"

The man hugged me. His sentimental mood may have been stimulated by alcohol, but I could not discern any traces of drunkenness in his kindly smiling eyes.

"I did not intend to make trouble," he assured me, "but you said yourself, people talk too much after a gulp. How right you are!"

THE SOLDIERS AND THE SECOND DUMA

The government played with the Duma as a cat plays with a mouse, making it clear that it could stop the talks in the Tauride Palace at any time. Only a small minority of the people—certainly less than in 1905—now backed the throne. The arrogant self-confidence of the government stemmed from the fact that, after the end of the war with Japan and demobilization of the huge wartime army, it